

Advanced training: Nose nudge



Remember to stick to a maximum of 3 minute training sessions!

This is a brief overview of the training stages to gradually 'shape' the task of teaching your dog to 'nudge' the top of your child's leg which we discuss in the workshops. This works better with larger breeds of dog due to height; for smaller dogs, the button push could be a better option. The 'nose nudge' can be useful to distract from/interrupt a behaviour, such as during a meltdown, limiting the time on a computer, or repetitive hand washing.



In order to teach the 'nose nudge' successfully, it is very important that your dog is already used to the noises that are associated with a meltdown. Refer to your 'Training for a safe, well adjusted dog' handout from workshop 1 before progressing.

Step 1: Be ready with your treat bag, sticky label with a 'X' on (your visual prompt/cue) and clicker. (Refer to the 'Advanced training: Clicker training' handout from workshop 3 if needed). At a later stage you will also need a volunteer.

Step 2: We want to set you and your dog up for success so we don't want to ask for too much from them at this early stage. Place your target sticker on a sturdy chair or table leg, ideally at your dog's nose level. Stand or sit beside the sticker in order to be able to reward them next to it which will encourage your dog to begin to make the association that this is why they are getting a treat. Every time your dog looks in the direction of the sticker, click and reward. Remember we do not want to bring in a verbal cue yet.

Continue to do this over your 2/3 minute training sessions, slowly and steadily at your dog's pace, until you get to the point that your dog is automatically looking at the sticker and touching it with their nose for a reward.

Step 3: When your dog is looking at the sticker, confidently and happily each time, try moving the sticker to different chair or table legs etc. so you are both sure and confident that they are recognising it is the sticker and not the chair/table leg.

Step 4: Once your dog is confident, you can then delay the 'click' for a fraction of a second, ever so slightly increasing the gap between the 'nudge' and your 'click'. If your dog is confident enough, they will offer a stronger 'nudge' and if not yet at this stage, they will give up or get frustrated. If this is the case, just continue on step 2 for a bit longer. Continue this until it becomes a firm nudge.

Step 5: Now try adding a bit of distance between you and the sticker. Moving just one small step away from it, test whether your dog is still confident to 'nudge'. If happy, you can continue progressing, adding a little bit more distance, one step at a time. Continue to click when you get the nudge movement.

If your dog looks confused, frustrated or stressed in any way, such as standing and looking at you wondering what you want them to do and/or displaying the FIDDLE behaviours described in the 'Canine communication and safety' handout for workshop 2, just move closer again to the sticker, and progress at a slower pace. Contact the **Family Dog** team if you are unsure.

Once you can move away to the distance you would like and they return to nudge it, you know they have got it and you can move to the next step.

Step 6: Try moving the sticker on to other stationary objects and see if they respond in the same way. Once all of this becomes a natural movement when they see the sticker, you are ready to move on to a leg!

Step 7: Find a willing volunteer to stand with the sticker on their leg and repeat the process as in step 2, just as if that person's leg is a chair leg, as we discussed in workshop 3. (They may end up with a soggy leg if you have a particularly sloppy dog!)

Step 8: Once your dog is confident with 'nudging' the sticker placed on your volunteer's leg, you will be able to progress further by gradually making your volunteer mimic the actions and behaviours that your child may be doing when a 'nudge' may be needed.

To introduce a bit of movement slowly and steadily, simply ask your volunteer to step back and forward very slowly to begin with. At each subsequent session, as your dog is confident, gradually build up speed and movement.

If at any point your dog hesitates, FIDDLES, or gets frustrated as mentioned in step 5, go back a step or two and gradually build up again slowly. It is crucial this bit is taken slowly, as scaring your dog at this stage will mean they may not want to nudge when your child needs it most.

Step 9: Once you have your dog confidently 'nudging' your volunteer's leg whilst they are mimicking the behaviours and actions that your child is likely to be doing, you will then be ready to ask your volunteer to slowly and gradually build up any sounds that your child may be doing at the time a 'nudge' is needed. Sometimes it is fun to get siblings involved in this part. Again, build it up gradually and get in touch with us at any time if you are unsure.

Step 10: Now that they have hopefully understood all of this, as they move in towards the sticker, add a verbal cue. The word "nudge" is the word that we use, however you could use anything you want as that word is simply associated with that movement. Take into consideration that if you use more of an every day word and it comes up in conversation away from needing the task, you may have a dog nudging your leg!

Once the verbal cue is associated, remove the sticker and practise without it, with your volunteer mimicking the actions and sounds your child is likely to make at the point when you would want them to interrupt with a 'nudge'.

You are then ready to go!